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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 21st MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 10 July 1992, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. MROZIEWICZ (Poland)

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Coordination of the policies and activities of the specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system related to the following theme:

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING THEME:

(a) ASSISTANCE IN THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY AND SUPPORT TO VULNERABLE GROUPS, INCLUDING ASSISTANCE DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMMES (continued) (E/1992/27, 47)

Mr. HADDAD (World Bank) said that sustainable poverty reduction, as the primary objective of the World Bank, could be achieved through sustainable economic growth, investment in people and protection of the environment. The Bank had recently issued a Poverty Reduction Handbook on poverty-reduction strategies, "good-practice" operational approaches, analytical and lending instruments, measuring and monitoring, and experience of coordination.

There seemed to be a consensus on the strategies for poverty reduction; the so-called conflict between growth and poverty reduction had been resolved and the potential conflict between environmental and poverty concerns had been well handled at the recent United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. What was now needed was collaboration in the implementation of strategies. There had been considerable coordination within and without the United Nations system, and significant experience had been accumulated.

Seven principles and mechanisms for collaboration on poverty reduction had emerged from the World Bank's own experience: firstly, coordination should be at the country level, and firmly grounded in country-specific analysis; secondly, collaboration should ensure linkages between poverty-reduction measures and macroeconomic policies; thirdly, collaboration should include bilateral donors, multilateral agencies, development banks and non-governmental organizations; fourthly, collaboration should be based on comparative advantages and should make up for institutional limitations; fifthly, in many instances collaboration on a country poverty-alleviation

(Mr. Haddad, World Bank)

programme required concerted long-term support, not just for capital expenditure, but also for recurrent expenditure in order to ensure sustainability and to minimize fiscal risks when external support came to an end; sixthly, coordination, to be sustained, must be nourished at working institutional levels; and seventhly, extensive use should be made of such coordination mechanisms as consultative groups and round tables, workshops for in-depth exchange of information, co-financing and parallel financing, project implementation and technical assistance.

Success in reducing poverty ultimately depended on a country's commitment, policies, domestic resources and income. Any inter-agency coordination should therefore support country efforts, and the World Bank was determined to work still more closely with its partners in that endeavour.

Mr. BHATIA (International Monetary Fund) said that the need for close collaboration between the Bretton Woods institutions, especially IMF, and the other agencies of the United Nations system, arose from recognition that, firstly, individual country-adjustment programmes, to be sustainable, must give due regard to social and sectoral aspects, especially poverty eradication, while individual social and sectoral development projects would also be sustainable only in the context of macroeconomic stability; and that secondly, in the social and sectoral fields, the other agencies had a comparative manpower and technical advantage over the Bretton Woods institutions.

The conclusions of the joint 1990 seminar organized with the participation of IMF and other United Nations agencies, to which the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Development had referred in his statement, had fostered increasing interaction between the agencies and IMF. As a result, country programmes had been enriched, and now contained a wide spectrum of social and sectoral policy measures and projects in which the United Nations system could assist national authorities within an agreed, internationally supported, macroeconomic policy framework. Pending further restructuring of the United Nations system, the framework of collaboration outlined at the seminar provided practical modalities for strengthened collaboration and reflected many of the concerns and suggestions advanced

(Mr. Bhatia, IMF)

during the current discussions. He therefore wondered whether it was useful to request the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) itself to elaborate such modalities.

The emphasis on field-level coordination and on the role of the resident coordinator was correct, but that only ensured "external" coordination and would not necessarily ensure the inclusion of appropriate projects within the country programme. There was a need to "internalize" that process, which in turn required capacity-building at the ministries and agencies level within each country. The United Nations system could be useful in that process, which would also help to integrate sectoral inputs into overall policy formulation.

In conclusion, he drew attention to some inevitable handicaps hindering inter-agency collaboration, namely a tendency to look inward rather than to other agencies for prompt action, different paces of work cycles, resource constraints, the difficulty of reconciling unconditional and conditional grant and loan operations in formulating programmes, the multiplicity of United Nations funds and programmes, and differing philosophies as to the appropriate adjustment policies. No formal mechanisms would overcome those hurdles, but pragmatic interaction between the various institutions through informal contacts would be of benefit.

Mr. JAZAIRY (President, International Fund for Agricultural Development) said that two aspects of the growth in absolute poverty in the developing world were of particular concern: the first was the deteriorating situation regarding poverty and hunger in sub-Saharan Africa, and the second was the fact that in coming years most of the additional rural poor were likely to be women. Such a challenge would require coordinated and determined action by all United Nations agencies in partnership with the States concerned, based on a shared approach to poverty alleviation.

Conventional approaches in the past had tended to regard the poor primarily as the object of welfare or the beneficiaries of the "trickle-down" effect of aggregate growth. In fact the poor made a substantial contribution: for example, smallholders, especially women, accounted for the bulk of food production in many developing countries. Given proper policies

(Mr. Jazairy, IFAD)

and incentives, the underutilized capacity of the poor could be made into a resource for development rather than an obstacle to it.

One adverse factor was the cycle of external disasters, such as drought, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Emergency assistance, rather than funding for rehabilitation and desertification control, had been the easier option in recent years, but would not of itself reduce vulnerability to climatic hazards. In recognition of that fact, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) had launched, in 1986, the first regionally specific programme to help combat drought and desertification in Africa, mobilizing $300 million in additional resources. Those funds had financed projects for combining crop-intensification to meet immediate needs with longer-term steps to promote resilience to drought and enhance the environment. In 1991, IFAD member States had decided to continue the programme into a second phase, which it was hoped would generate a further $300 million. Pledges totalling approximately $90 million had already been received from France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, Kuwait and Nigeria. The support of the Economic and Social Council had also played an important part in the success achieved during the first phase. However, an unprecedented drought in southern Africa underscored the need for generous contributions to the second phase, and he hoped that the Council would issue a strong appeal for additional contributions.

IFAD had also given attention to the role of rural women in combating hunger, and had therefore supported the initiative taken by a number of First Ladies in organizing a unique World Summit for the Economic Advancement of Rural Women, held earlier in the year at Geneva. Similar Summits of First Ladies were planned at the regional level. Implementation of the Declaration adopted at the Geneva Summit would change the lives of hundreds of millions of impoverished rural women and contribute substantially to reducing global poverty and hunger. The text of the Declaration had been submitted to the Council in the form of a resolution sponsored by a number of countries whose First Ladies had participated. For its part, IFAD would devote itself to translating the Declaration into action at the field level in its project design and implementation.

Mr. PETERS (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that each day in recent months some 10,000 new refugees had been forced to flee their homes, and worldwide refugee numbers had doubled since the 1980s, currently standing at some 17 million. Most were women and children, and over 80 per cent were in the developing world. Large numbers were also returning to their countries of origin, notably Afghanistan and Cambodia, and there were prospects for large-scale repatriation in the near future in many other parts of the world. In many cases, refugees were returning to countries devastated by years of conflict, and large-scale rehabilitation assistance was often one of the prerequisites for their durable reintegration.

Against that background, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had tried to play a catalytic role in promoting awareness of refugee problems among development agencies and funding institutions, and in encouraging the inclusion of activities to benefit refugees, returnees and displaced persons in the mainstream of development planning. Sustainable development was important in solving refugee situations or preventing their emergence.

The pressures generated by massive influxes of refugees in developing countries and by the increased movement of migrants towards the industrialized world had led the international community to place greater emphasis on preventing refugee flows and on solving existing refugee problems, notably through repatriation. Naturally, the extent to which the twin objectives of solution and prevention could be achieved often depended on political factors and initiatives, but it also required the willingness of individual Governments, the United Nations system and the international community as a whole to eliminate the causes of departure, to prepare the ground for repatriation and to ensure proper reintegration.

Many refugees would be returning to communities in which extreme poverty prevailed, and unless their return was accompanied by comprehensive development programmes, they might undermine prospects for reconciliation and for political and economic recovery.

(Mr. Peters)

One obstacle to effective reintegration was the gap separating UNHCR short-term assistance from more extensive rehabilitation and development aid furnished by other agencies. A more systematic linkage between refugee or returnee aid and development assistance was needed if repatriation was to constitute a truly durable solution. Despite significant progress made in conjunction with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other agencies, the responsibilities of agencies at the various stages of the relief and development process still required further clarification.

Given the close interrelationship between the political, economic and social factors causing refugees, development aid and poverty reduction were crucial to any preventive strategy. In many developing countries, democratization and development were fragile, and economic deprivation could easily arouse political and intercommunal tension and armed conflict which, in turn, generated refugees. Only a long-term economic strategy could address the problems of underdevelopment and the vicious circle of poverty and violence. Nevertheless, carefully targeted development assistance with an emphasis on priority human needs clearly had a role to play in mitigating and removing the root causes of migratory and refugee movements, and in the reintegration of returnees. In particular, increased resources must be channelled into improving the access of the impoverished to basic services and to sustainable development at the community level, and it was to be hoped that a significant proportion of the funds freed by the end of cold war confrontation could be harnessed for that purpose.

Mr. MONGBE (Benin) said that poverty was an intolerable burden for one billion people in Asia, Africa and Latin America. His delegation welcomed the recognition of the problem at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and its inclusion in Agenda 21. Any attempt to tackle poverty-related issues must be based on country-specific programmes complemented by international initiatives. It was to be hoped that the resources released by the end of the cold war could be used to combat poverty and its attendant misery.

The United Nations must formulate a specific strategy to deal with poverty and promote sustainable development, along the lines indicated in

(Mr. Mongbe, Benin)

Agenda 21. The key to such an approach lay in providing individuals with sustainable means of existence. That would require integrated job-creation and income-promotion strategies in disadvantaged regions. Governments must increase their investments in human capital among every vulnerable segment of society through a range of sectoral interventions, for which major resources would be required.

The attainment of sustainable development, and hence the elimination of poverty, required widespread participation in development activities and in decision-making. The living conditions of women, in particular, must be improved. Attention should also be focused on children's issues. In that connection, Benin welcomed the inclusion of poverty by UNDP in its fifth programming cycle as one of the Programme's six major priorities, based on the strengthening of national development capacities. His delegation also commended the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for its monitoring of food availability in developing countries. Greater support should be given to UNHCR in assisting populations driven from their homes by conflict or extreme poverty.

His delegation welcomed the recognition at the current session of the imperative need for massive efforts to eliminate poverty and of the appropriateness of policies which would enable the poor to attain a decent standard of living. The focus on hunger, the need to integrate women into development and the formulation of emergency measures to protect vulnerable segments of society were also of note.

While structural adjustment programmes no doubt benefited the economies of the countries concerned, they frequently entailed harsh social consequences for the most vulnerable segments of society. The attention devoted by the specialized agencies to the negative impact of macroeconomic adjustments on living conditions by the specialized agencies augured well. Structural adjustment programmes had frequently disrupted the availability of resources for education, health and social security, often vital to the vulnerable segments of society. In many African countries, moreover, the ranks of the impoverished had been swollen by former employees of State enterprises, compelled to seek new employment in the wake of structural adjustment policies.

(Mr. Mongbe, Benin)

His delegation supported the Secretary-General's appeal for the more rational use of resources and greater coherence in executing activities, and endorsed the means of combating poverty suggested in Agenda 21. Lastly, he trusted that the current session would lead to real action to break the vicious cycle of poverty.

Mr. NANDOE (Suriname) said that there was growing concern at the extent of structural poverty and the increasing numbers of poor people in the developing countries, estimated at more than one billion. To meet their needs, food production, industrial output and energy use would need to increase tremendously. Further, the UNDP Human Development Report, 1992 indicated that the disparities between rich and poor were widening. Developing countries were unequal partners in the world market, which generally benefited the stronger, developed economies. Even where the developing countries had a competitive advantage, market rules were often changed to prevent open competition.

Social deprivation remained widespread in the developing world. Nearly half the children in rural areas were not protected against communicable diseases, while some two thirds of families were without safe drinking water or adequate sanitation. On the basis of current trends, the children - especially girls - of the poorest 20 per cent of families were not likely to become literate. Furthermore, structural adjustment measures in many cases might have disproportionately hurt the poor in terms of declining health, education and living standards.

The United Nations should make poverty eradication a major priority. To that end, efforts should be made to provide social safety nets when the poor could not generate enough income to escape from absolute poverty. Their access to such basic services as health and housing must be improved. Further, policies must be promoted that would give them access to productive assets.

A global action programme on poverty alleviation was needed, with a serious review of the issue in time for the proposed 1995 world summit for social development.

Mr. MONTAÑO (Mexico) said that a fifth of mankind lived in conditions such that their basic needs for food, health and housing remained unmet. The enormous resources devoted in earlier decades to confrontation must now be reoriented towards the solution of priority issues such as poverty. The alleviation of poverty could be tackled only within a comprehensive approach at the international level, with the establishment of an environment conducive to development. Macroeconomic decisions were of the utmost importance. The impact of poverty had worsened in Latin America in recent years as a result of drastic structural adjustment programmes imposed by the need to meet financial commitments stemming from external indebtedness. Neglect of the social element had engendered a serious deterioration in standards of living.

An open and fair trading system was of decisive importance. The incomes of the developing countries largely depended on the openness of international markets to their products. Paradoxically, just when many developing countries were opening up their markets, protectionism was on the rise in the advanced countries. The limited progress made in the Uruguay Round was disquieting: should the negotiations fail, the fight against poverty would suffer accordingly.

Given the close link between impoverished societies and weak democracies, one of the best defences for democracy was to eliminate extreme poverty. Yet the international community had not taken the requisite action. In addition to macroeconomic reform, there must be an increase in official development assistance. Although the United Nations system was becoming increasingly involved in the campaign against poverty, the effectiveness of its activities depended on coordination. The multilateral financial institutions and the regional commissions should increase their involvement.

For its part, Mexico had established a national solidarity programme to assist the poor. It encompassed social welfare, employment opportunities and development of productive capacities, as well as regional infrastructure projects benefiting the community. The programme relied on individual and communal initiatives, participation in all programme activities, and co-responsibility. It sought to promote social mobilization of the poor. No

(Mr. Montaño, Mexico)

bureaucratic apparatus had been created; existing structures had been employed. In practical terms, the programme amounted to a cluster of investment projects financed from varied sources. Such a cooperative approach between social groups and the Government had expanded the arsenal available in the fight against poverty. High priority had been given to health and primary education. Solidarity committees had been established in urban and rural communities throughout the country, providing a wide range of services to millions of Mexicans.

The increase in poverty in Latin America was largely attributable to factors beyond its control, such as slow world growth. Nearly half the population of Latin America and the Caribbean lived in extreme poverty. In an effort to initiate a regional response, Mexico had proposed that the Organization of American States should convene a special assembly in 1993.

It had become clear at the current session that the specialized agencies had already begun to devote a good part of their efforts to the fight against poverty, but the problem was so vast that no real progress was possible without optimum coordination. As yet there was no global strategy on the elimination of poverty. Any strategy that emerged would call for compromise and joint action on a comprehensive basis. An international environment propitious to economic growth and an open and fair trading system were essential in such a scenario.

Ms. POLLACK (United States of America) said that the most effective way to alleviate poverty would be to create conditions conducive to gainful employment and to ensure the efficient allocation of resources while fostering entrepreneurship and the private sector. Success had been achieved by some East Asian countries in that regard. Experience had shown that complex programmes beyond a country's capacity to implement did not succeed.

Effective coordination depended on a flow of information throughout the United Nations system and its States, not simply cataloguing recent appraisals, useful as such details were, but providing the results of system-wide evaluation exercises. Greater efforts were also needed to draw lessons from past programmes. As the representative of the World Bank had said, those activities would be particularly useful if carried out at the

(Ms. Pollack, United States)

individual country level. Policies and programmes to alleviate poverty must also aim to enhance the role of women; the reports presented by the Secretary-General and the various agencies were sadly lacking in that regard, and it would be useful to hear what action the agencies were taking. Her delegation would also like the heads of the specialized agencies to indicate how they thought collaboration could be improved.

The Secretary-General had noted, in his report (E/1992/47) that no system-wide anti-poverty strategy existed; her delegation shared the view, however, that such a system would not be useful. It was important to focus coordination efforts on the country level, integrating Governments into the development activities of the system. But field activity alone was inadequate, and could lead to neglect of headquarters responsibility for coordination and of central funding questions. With regard to the latter, system-wide coordination of funds was essential; indeed, discussion of coordination with no mention of funding might be seen as a wish to avoid a meaningful approach.

Popular participation, too, was essential to any programmes to alleviate poverty. A corollary of that was good governance; in that connection, it would be useful to appraise the record of countries whose poverty-eradication programmes had been most successful. The agencies might also wish to consider how to embody such assessments in their coordination efforts.

Mr. NORDMANN (Observer for Switzerland) welcomed the report of the Secretary-General (E/1992/47) as a first step towards improving coordination within the United Nations system. His country had always supported efforts to assist the most disadvantaged countries and encouraged the activities undertaken to that end by the various United Nations bodies. Given the extremely complex nature of the fight against poverty and the vast range of actors involved, improved coordination was vital. However, it was essential to recognize the influence of other factors which were highly political in nature, such as income distribution, social structures, and different visions of society, and to acknowledge the limits of international cooperation by comparison with the role played by individual societies in the developing countries.

(Mr. Nordmann, Observer, Switzerland)

While supporting efforts to improve circulation of information both within and outside the system, he stressed the need to draw on the vast experience acquired over the years both by the various agencies and by the developing countries themselves. That experience had not been fully utilized in devising more appropriate and better coordinated measures in the field which would be of more direct benefit to the developing countries in helping them to take charge of their own development. A critical qualitative assessment of past experience could serve as a practical tool for the international community and provide fresh impetus for future actions.

He welcomed the mechanisms for inter-institutional consultation and cooperation introduced by ACC and the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP), as well as the enhanced dialogue between the Bretton Woods institutions and other bodies within the United Nations system. He also commended the emphasis placed on human development and social policy in the statement by the Director-General of IMF and hoped that the current debate would help pave the way for the proposed world summit for social development.

Mr. BIN MOMEN (Bangladesh) said that a large number of developing countries, including his own, had undertaken macroeconomic structural adjustment, with mixed results and uneven impact in the various groups of the population. Such policies must take fully into account the needs of particularly vulnerable groups, and could not succeed without a favourable international climate in the fields of resources, trade, market access, debt reduction and technology transfer.

The developing countries, with their inadequate infrastructure and institutions, faced an extremely difficult task, and the United Nations system could greatly help them by providing a coherent, coordinated and simplified approach to cooperation. In that regard, his delegation appreciated the important role played by JCGP and ACC in system-wide coordination, particularly in regard to rural development.

Full use should be made of national institutions and their capacities enhanced. Since any poverty-eradication programme was a multi-sectoral package, it was essential for all agencies to have a focused and coordinated

(Mr. Bin Momen, Bangladesh)

approach, especially at the field level, and in that connection the resident coordinator system was a valuable tool which could be further strengthened.

The needs of the least developed countries should be accorded special attention, and the Programme of Action adopted by the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries should be implemented as a matter of urgency.

In Bangladesh a large number of non-governmental organizations were supplementing the Government's efforts in poverty-eradication programmes, but there was room for wider outreach and greater cost-effectiveness in programme delivery.

Man-made and natural disasters also played a part in reducing the poor to the level of absolute poverty. Accordingly, long-term development, including poverty eradication, was closely linked to disaster control and management, and the establishment of the new Department of Humanitarian Affairs would be greatly welcomed in countries such as Bangladesh which were particularly liable to natural disasters.

Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States, welcomed the joint paper provided by UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA in response to delegations' earlier requests for comments, and regretted that no other agencies had yet replied. During the current useful dialogue there had been welcome stress on the need to meet national requirements, promote national capacity-building and strive for an integrated response by the United Nations system to individual countries' needs. He requested UNDP to indicate what specific methods it used in order to promote national strategies to alleviate poverty and to improve coordination for that purpose. He also asked whether UNCTAD could say how its new Committee on Poverty Alleviation sought effective inputs to its deliberations from the rest of the United Nations system. He would also welcome word from any agencies about the steps they were taking to ensure the adequate involvement of non-governmental organizations at headquarters level. Lastly, he urged all to take advantage of the current opportunity for full and frank debate.

Mr. HJELMAKER (Sweden) noted that the representatives of UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA had referred, in their joint paper, to common country strategies. An integrated approach was, of course, important; but the issue was not simply about coordination but also about roles and mandates, the need being to avoid duplication. He had some doubts about the idea that ACC should be requested to develop modalities for monitoring activities; it might be better to use those already existing. He agreed that close links between analytical and operational capacities were important; there again, however, the need for a better division of labour was clear, and he felt that a suitably strengthened Secretariat could and should play a greater role in the analytical and strategic aspects.

Mr. MALONE (Canada) referred to the text mentioned by the previous speaker, and to the suggestion that ACC should be requested to develop modalities. The Development Assistance Committee of OECD had long been carrying out studies to monitor progress and flows of official development assistance (ODA); it was important, in that regard, for the United Nations system to guard against using resources to produce information obtainable elsewhere. He also noted that no agency had yet responded to his earlier request for suggestions on how the United Nations system could help to enhance popular participation in activities to alleviate poverty.

Mr. KAARIA (Finland) said that, in monitoring progress and the provision of ODA, the focus should be on the priority given, in national budgets, to helping the poorest sectors of the community. In that connection, a distinction should perhaps be made between the application of national resources and that of ODA; the former could be more usefully applied to direct poverty-alleviation programmes, and the latter, which would contain foreign-currency and technical components, targeted longer-term aspects such as investment and education. In other words, ODA should be seen as a catalyst enabling Governments to release national resources for more direct action. He agreed however that, for the latter type of activity, the funds of United Nations agencies could be applied also. Statistics to show the proportion of ODA currently applied to human development would be useful.

Mr. GARELIK (Russian Federation) said that the current discussion reflected a growing recognition of the need for a clear understanding of the respective responsibilities of Governments and United Nations bodies in the task of alleviating poverty. His delegation would like to see a review of priorities and policies for the 1990s, from two standpoints. Firstly, with regard to the allocation of resources, he endorsed the comments made by the representative of UNICEF regarding the greater involvement of donors. Secondly, Governments themselves should consider the allocation of national resources as a matter of priority, bearing in mind the current opportunities for reductions in military expenditure. It was also important, as many previous speakers had noted, that recipient Governments should, in view of limitations to international funding, ensure the most effective use of their own resources. Previous speakers had rightly stressed the multifaceted nature of the problem of poverty and the need to ensure that action to alleviate it provided the utmost support for the most vulnerable groups of society. In that connection, the situation of countries in transition had received inadequate attention.

His delegation welcomed the growing cooperation between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions, as instanced by the cooperation between UNDP and the World Bank in measures to take account of the social aspects of structural adjustment programmes. An increased IMF involvement in that regard was essential.

The joint reply submitted by UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA was a good example of a joint approach on priority issues. He stressed the desirability of developing a unified strategy, and supported the idea of the leadership role of resident coordinators in field work.

The Secretariat's summary of the discussions provided a useful outline of the deliberations on the issue of coordination. In that regard, the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean had referred to a forthcoming regional conference on poverty; the other regional commissions and bodies of the United Nations system should follow the proceedings of that forum and study its recommendations. With regard to the need for specialized system-wide machinery to coordinate action to alleviate

(Mr. Garelik, Russian Federation)

poverty, his delegation, too, had some doubts; the possibilities afforded by ACC's structure, and the joint work of ACC and the Committee for Programme and Coordination, should be borne in mind.

Mr. JAZAIRY (President, International Fund for Agricultural Development) said that a number of previous speakers had mentioned the issue of complementarity between the macroeconomic approach of the World Bank and the activities of the agencies which constituted the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP). But it should not be overlooked that a solely macroeconomic approach could be self-defeating; a system-wide approach at grass-roots level was needed. Had IFAD been able to contribute to the response paper submitted by UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA, it would have pointed out that the entire JCGP membership was already giving priority to that aspect. For example, some two months previously IFAD had hosted a meeting of all the institutional heads and had established country teams, representing all the institutions concerned, to analyse the grass-roots situation in Malawi, the Philippines, Yemen, Bangladesh, Bolivia and Namibia. Studies relating to the first three had already been completed.

Popular participation was, of course, the key to the design of any programme and to its credibility. The involvement of local non-governmental organizations was vital in that regard. So too was proper attention to the role of women. Many past programmes had been frustrated because of failure to recognize the status and contribution of women in a country's social and economic life. Indeed, the issue was not about "integration" but recognition of the impact of women's existing share in activities. In recent years their role had further increased owing to conflicts and natural disasters, as a result of which the number of households headed by women had increased to over 30 per cent of the total in Africa, for example. Such facts, and the issues they raised, must be reflected in any strategy.

Mr. GUERRERO (Philippines) welcomed the commitment of the agencies to help poverty eradication and agreed with the President of IFAD that pragmatic coordination was required not only within the United Nations system but also between agencies and donor countries in order to avoid policy conflicts.

(Mr. Guerrero, Philippines)

Governments should bear the main responsibility for broad policy outlines, but it was vital to ensure that strategies were drawn up in parallel with international aid programmes. It was also vital that Governments should not be bullied by donor countries into accepting measures they did not endorse.

He agreed with the representative of Finland that a balance needed to be struck between long-term and short-term programmes, particularly in the case of training and education, where results could not be expected immediately.

Many developing countries did not have sophisticated planning systems and emphasis needed to be placed on national capacity-building. It was not a question of spoonfeeding, but of helping Governments to help themselves by providing them with the appropriate techniques.

Finally, poverty eradication was not just a matter of altruism since the benefits it would bring in the form of security, peace and income-generation would be of value to all.

Mr. BERTHELOT (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development), replying to a question by the representative of the United Kingdom, said that the newly established Committee on Poverty Alleviation would be meeting for the first time in January 1993, when it would draw up a detailed programme of work. Before that date, the Secretariat would be preparing a note on the work programme in consultation with all the relevant agencies. In addition, an inter-agency meeting would be held in November 1992, when efforts would be made to identify possible shortcomings in the system, with particular reference to the need for an integrated approach, balance between national and international considerations and the need to take account of the situation in countries in transition. In replying to a question asked at a previous meeting by the representative of Japan, he explained that the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational) (CCQS (OPS)) was engaged in activities at both national and headquarters level. It had established guidelines on the operational implications of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, setting out the goals advocated as priorities by the various agencies within the system. It had asked agency country representatives to cooperate in devising country-specific strategies, for which coordination at both national and

(Mr. Berthelot)

headquarters level was necessary. CCSQ (OPS) intended to contribute to those strategies and a document was being drawn up with the aid of the World Bank and certain JCGB bodies which would be discussed in September 1992.

Mr. SALL (United Nations Development Programme), replying to a question by the United Kingdom representative concerning national capacity-building, said that poverty eradication had been a UNDP priority since decision 1990/34 had been adopted by the UNDP Governing Council. The decision stipulated that human development was to be the main goal of all UNDP activities, and it identified national capacity-building as one way of achieving that goal and singled out six priority areas in which capacity-building needed to be developed. On the question of how national capacity was to be created or developed, he cited the joint initiatives by JCGP referred to by the President of IFAD, and noted that UNDP had launched several other similar initiatives involving countries such as Rwanda, Pakistan and China.

UNDP had also sought to promote the capacity of developing countries to devise their own strategies, by promoting national meetings aimed at identifying the most significant local indicators and gathering relevant local data.

In reply to the question by the representative of Canada concerning the promotion of participation in development by local populations, he pointed out that UNDP Governing Council decision 1990/34 had emphasized that popular participation was a vital element of poverty eradication. UNDP had embarked on a staff training policy at all levels to increase awareness of the problems involved in such participation. It was also developing a series of initiatives financed from extrabudgetary resources, such as the Africa 2000 Network, funded by Canada, France, Norway, Japan and Denmark, which was helping communities at grass-roots level to safeguard their environment. Because such programmes were funded from extrabudgetary resources, no authority was required from the Governments concerned. However, Governments were always consulted since it was felt that the best way of encouraging participation was not by playing off non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

(Mr. Sall)

against Government structures, but by offering examples of successful projects in which both parties played a role.

Mrs. WARZAZI (Morocco) said that a paper had been circulated which purported to summarize the Council's debates on the item, but which gave undue weight to certain points of view at the expense of others. She called on the President to explain the source and status of the document.

The PRESIDENT explained that the document in question was a "non-paper" drawn up by the Secretariat for his own personal use and had no official status. Some delegations had asked for the document to be circulated and he had acceded to that request. He agreed that the document contained contradictions and might be considered ambiguous. He would ask the Secretariat to revise the document in order to reflect the debates more fully.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.